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News Release

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Immediate Release

Assistance Now Available to Restore and Protect Privately-Owned Land capable of supporting Wetland Habitat

Sign-up Deadline is March 12, 2021

COLUMBUS, OH, Feb. 10, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages people and groups wanting to restore and protect critical wetlands to consider enrolling their property into conservation easements. This year, USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) will invest in technical and financial assistance to help private landowners, tribes and other groups protect these valuable lands.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, wetland reserve easement (ACEP-WRE) focuses on restoring previously drained agricultural lands and protecting the restored wetlands with easements. Landowners are compensated for enrolling their land in easements.

"Protecting these lands preserves Ohio's heritage, natural resources and open space," said John Wilson, NRCS Acting State Conservationist in Ohio. "Easements are another option for people who want to take additional steps to preserve some of our state's most precious resources."

Applications for ACEP-WRE are taken on a continuous basis. The deadline to receive fiscal year 2021 funding is March 12, 2021.

Wetland Reserve Easements

Through ACEP-WRE, NRCS helps landowners restore and protect wetland ecosystems. Wetlands are one of nature's most productive ecosystems providing many ecological, societal, and economic benefits.

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In the 1700s, wetlands covered 5 million acres of Ohio, primarily in the northwestern part of the state, referred to as the "Great Black Swamp." Competing land uses resulted in a 90% loss of wetlands by the late 1900s. Since 2005, NRCS has assisted landowners in restoring more than 25,000 acres of wetlands in Ohio.

"Wetlands provide many benefits, including critical habitat for a wide array of wildlife species," added Wilson. "They also store floodwaters, clean and recharge groundwater, sequester carbon, trap sediment, and filter pollutants for clean water."

Last year, Ohio landowners restored 480 acres of wetlands through ACEP. Landowners can choose either a permanent or 30-year wetland conservation easement.

Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can successfully be restored, croplands or grasslands subject to flooding, previously restored wetlands and riparian areas that link protected wetland areas. As part of the easement, NRCS and the landowner work together to develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland.

More Information

Ohio landowners interested in wetland reserve easements and partners interested in agricultural easements should contact Michael Hasty, Ohio ACEP-WRE easement coordinator at 614-255-2442 or via e-mail to michael.hasty@usda.gov .

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